



...and another thing

Amazing Planning & Development factoids that will keep you riveted!
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"America is fortifying up" state Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder in the May 1997 issue of American Demographics article titled "Places to Hide." Forts, in this case, are gated communities which are becoming more prevalent with experts estimating that four to eight million people live within their confines. While their popularity has been particularly noticeable over the past decade, gated communities are hardly a new concept. During the Middle Ages, royalty would enclose a portion of their kingdom to protect their families and loyal subjects. In the late 19th century, private gated streets were developed for St. Louis' beer barons.

The gated communities of recent time began as retirement and leisure communities and were most prevalent in the Sunbelt, particularly in Florida, Texas, and California. Gated communities are no longer reserved solely for the rich and powerful. Their existence cuts across socioeconomic boundaries and does so for a variety of reasons. "Lifestyle" is the original reason for the



modern gated community. These communities exist primarily to facilitate leisure activities such as golf and/or tennis. The second type is "elite" communities, which provide prestige and distinction. Residents are typically at least upper-middle class and acutely aware of class distinctions. The third type is the "security zone," which as

the name implies, is designed to create a safe, secure community.

Each of the three communities is designed for a purpose. But do they, in fact, serve their purpose? It would appear as though the lifestyle and elite communities provide the benefit that residents seek. But do security zones provide a community that is safer? Most experts concede that they do not greatly reduce crime and that what is provided is the illusion of increased security. Law enforcement experts state that if someone wants to break in badly enough, they can. Some argue that while gated communities may reduce crime within their walls, they deflect it to other non-walled areas nearby.

Gated communities are becoming more prevalent in the city of Las Vegas. They are appearing in both single and multi-family development with equal frequency. Most of the more than 300 gated communities identified have been in existence for less than 10 years. The communities range in size from four single-family units to 488 apartment units (400 units is the largest single-family community). The newly developed areas of the city, Summerlin, The Lakes, Desert Shores and Centennial Hills, are where the majority are located.

These are usually single family developments where the need most often satisfied is prestige and distinction (elite), though security may be an added benefit. In the eastern portion of the city, the gated communities are most often apartment complexes where, for security reasons, they are usually enclosed.

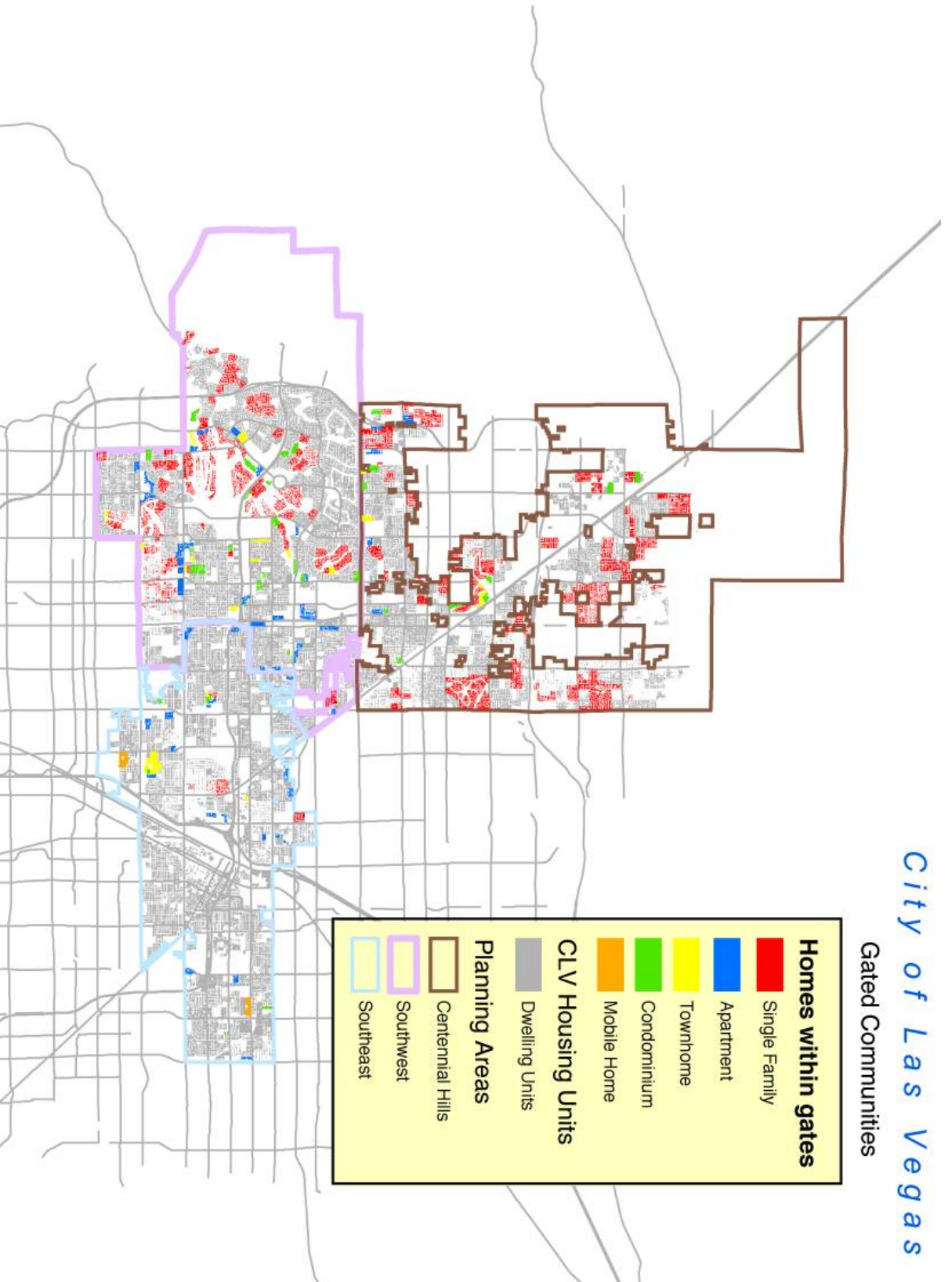


Not everyone is a fan of gated communities. New Urbanism offers a view of community development that does not support the concept of gated communities. Robert Steuteville in “New Urbanism: Comprehensive Report & Best Practices Guide” espouses adding more connecting streets, creating smaller blocks and greater accessibility to the outside world. Safety is achieved by defining private and public space, ensuring informal surveillance of streets, encouraging social interaction, and other techniques. Interconnectivity with surrounding neighborhoods, which provides greater pedestrian and automobile access, is a key element of New Urbanism, which believes gated communities wall people out.

Gated communities are a bit of a paradox for the city. In general, they tend to be upscale, with higher property values. Their opponents claim they are divisive. Whatever one’s position is, gated communities are here and their numbers will continue to grow as long as there is a demand for the benefits they provide.

City of Las Vegas

Gated Communities



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